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SPEAKER OF THE ASSEMBLY

November 25, 2014

To: Jo Ann Isken, Commission Chair  
Thomas Adams, Executive Director  
Instructional Quality Commission  
California Department of Education  
1430 N Street, Room 3207  
Sacramento, CA 95814

From: Fred Glass and Kent Wong, Co-chairs  
Speaker's Commission on Labor Education

Re: Comments on Draft History-Social Science Framework

We are pleased that this version of the Draft K-12 History-Social Science Framework includes significant improvements in course descriptions, and includes more serious attention to key moments and figures in the labor movement. For instance, the recommendations for collective bargaining and union organizing role-plays bring appropriate and classroom-tested pedagogical methods to bear on these topics.

We feel that two important issues still remain to be addressed, and hope that they may be folded into the proposed frameworks.

First, the Framework needs a Labor Studies elective. While there are many improvements in the Framework's course descriptions, we know that it is the grade level content standards that drive social studies instruction. Due to the very limited attention to the role and contributions of workers and the labor movement in the History-Social Science Content Standards (just seven specific references in all of K-12), we recommend that the Framework also include a Labor Studies elective.

Labor is not just a small special interest group competing for a fair share of attention in social studies. Labor is how we spend most of our life outside home and sleeping, and working is how the vast majority of our students will earn their living as adults. Based on the existing content standards, students learn very little about the pivotal role of the labor movement in social change, or the rights and widespread benefits we enjoy today due to the labor movement.

To become the most informed and effective participants in their communities and workplaces, students need access to an in-depth study of the history and contemporary

role of labor in US democracy and economic life. The importance of labor, and the role and contributions of the labor movement to our society merit a Labor Studies Elective.

Second, the use of the term "human capital" in the 12th grade Economics Draft, while widespread in the world of business economics, is not an appropriate substitution for conveying the skills, education, training and knowledge that inform labor in the modern workplace (see, for instance, the critique in Thomas Piketty's *Capitalism in the 21st Century*). The term denigrates the importance of labor, subsuming it within what in fact labor creates, which is capital. "Human capital" is an abstraction, and our students would be better served by using the concrete substitution, as appropriate in context, of "skills," "education," "training," etc.

Thank you for your attention to these suggestions.